Commissioners Present: Melinda Bussino, Jodi French, Roger Turner, Brad Horn, Nicholas Wallaert, Jack Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Priscilla Margola, Steve Skibniowsky, John Whitman, Edith Mas, Alan LaCombe, Eric Stevens, Heath Boyer, Elaine Beckwith, Piet van Loon, Fred Bullock, Dora Bouboulis, Emily Kunreuther,
Citizen Interest Commissioners Present: Richard Davis, Lynette Hamilton, Corky Elwell
Guests Present: Senator Peter Galbraith; Elissa Bhanti – Public, Brattleboro; Betty Frye – Public, Guilford
Staff Present: Chris Campany, Kate McCarthy, Ashley Collins
Introductions: There was a quorum of 15 towns present.
Convened: 7:38pm

Administrative Items & Reports:
Secretary’s Report: On a motion by Jodi French, seconded by Jack Cunningham the minutes from the January meeting were approved.
Executive Board Report: On a motion by Jodi French, seconded by Fred Bullock the February Draft Minutes were accepted.
Financial Report: On a motion by Steve Skibniowsky, seconded by Fred Bullock the finance report was approved.

Halifax Town Plan Approval: The panel reviewed the town plan and reported their findings back to the Planning Coordination Committee (PCC). The PCC recommended approval of the plan, and confirmation of the town plan and process. A motion to approve the plan as presented was moved by John Whitman, and seconded by Fred Bullock. The motion was unanimously approved. On the confirmation of the town plan and process, a motion was made by Fred Bullock, seconded by Jack Cunningham; motion was approved.

Executive Director’s Report & Other Business:
1) Chris explained that he would be presenting testimony about the WRC’s positions on issues related to the economic impacts of the eventual closure of the Vermont Yankee
nuclear power station before a hearing of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs to be held at the Brattleboro Retreat on February 23rd. The Executive Board had approved his appearance before the Senate committee.

2) Chris explained that the Executive Board had directed him to form an ad hoc committee to guide the work of the WRC in its efforts to plan for the eventual closure of the Vermont Yankee plant, including the WRC’s participation in a citizens’ post-Vermont Yankee planning committee described below. The WRC’s ad hoc committee would coordinate work around the broader range of issues associated with the eventual closure and decommissioning, and would be comprised of members with similarly diverse skill sets and interests (e.g., NRC processes, municipal/public finance, non-governmental organization services and philanthropy, water resources and regulation, etc.). The Energy Committee would continue to lead work on the Public Service Board Dockets (i.e., Dockets 7440 and 7600).

3) Chris informed the Commission that he had been participating in a small group organized by Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation Executive Director, Jeff Lewis, to facilitate arrangements for the aforementioned Senate committee hearing. Brattleboro Town Manager Barb Sondag, engineer Bob Stevens, and Director of the Mount Snow Chamber of Commerce Laura Sibilia, had also been chosen by Jeff to participate. Out of that effort came a proposal that a citizens’ post-Vermont Yankee planning committee be organized to facilitate planning around the eventual closure of the Vermont Yankee plant among a broad group of stakeholders. Stephan Morse was asked to chair this committee, and he agreed. Chris acknowledged that the organization of this effort had just begun. Commissioners commented that it was important that the committee be comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders. Commissioner Edie Mas made a motion that the WRC strongly support this effort to create a citizens committee to plan for the eventual closure of the Vermont Yankee plant. Jack Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

Senator Peter Galbraith:
Senator Peter Galbraith was present to discuss his legislative priorities. The Senator presented what he viewed as four things that are critical to the future of Windham County.

Vermont Yankee – The Senator explained that if the Nuclear Regulatory Commission approves the extension it could lead to legal action between Entergy and the state. He acknowledged that the decision not to renew the license of the plant was made by the state, and that the state should therefore play a role in assisting Windham County with the transition after the closure. The Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs will hold a hearing at the Brattleboro Retreat on February 23rd regarding the planning for, and economic impacts of, the eventual closure of Vermont Yankee. Senator Galbraith sits on this committee. The purpose of the hearing is not to relitigate the issues of
Vermont Yankee, but rather to assess the anticipated economic impacts of the closure and the planning efforts that are needed.

**Broadband** – The Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs voted out a Telecommunications Bill that is meant to clear regulatory hurdles in the deployment of broadband. Questions arose as to how municipalities might be able to make a financial contribution to schools to bring “middle mile” service to areas that might otherwise not have high-capacity fiber optic networks extended to them. Provisions in Act 60 may deter municipalities from contributing to school budgets. A question was also raised as to whether or not tariff issues have any bearing on where the fiber optic lines are run.

**Healthcare** – Senator Galbraith discussed the proposed approaches to reforming healthcare in Vermont, including where he believed there will be increased savings, and challenges associated with implementation. He was optimistic about the single-payer proposal developed by Dr. William Hsiao. Particular challenges include obtaining the necessary waivers from the Federal government to make this happen, and how is it ultimately to be paid for. There was extended discussion about how the new system would address Vermont residents working out of state versus non-residents working in Vermont, how this would affect the payroll tax system, and the potential impacts on small employers and the self-employed.

**Budget and Taxes** – The Senator recognized that the budget situation confronting the state is serious and challenging, and that the choices left to the legislature are not easy. Making cuts to social services and raising taxes are less preferred options. Recommendations from the Tax Commission report would be revenue neutral, but would redistribute the tax burden. The competitiveness of Vermont’s tax structure relative to that of other states is an issue that must be considered.

On a **motion** by Fred Bullock, and duly seconded, the meeting was **adjourned** by a unanimous vote of all present. **Meeting adjourned at 9:12pm**

Respectfully submitted,
Ashley Collins